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EIU-Sponsored Events to Commemorate "Darwin Day"

Feb-04-2004

While many recognize Feb. 12, 1809, as the date on which Abraham Lincoln was born, few realize that the 16th president entered into this world on the same day as naturalist Charles Darwin.

That number is rising, however, as individuals and groups world-wide join efforts with The Darwin Day Program in celebrating Darwin's contributions to philosophy/science. British-born Darwin, known primarily for his efforts at introducing the idea of evolution through natural selection, is recognized internationally as the author of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

This year, Eastern Illinois University joins a myriad of academic institutions in commemorating Darwin's contributions by hosting several educational events designed to teach others about Darwin and his theory. Gary N. Fritz, an associate professor of biological sciences, is among the organizers of the local programs.

According to Fritz, the goals of The Darwin Day Program have been to facilitate interaction between the public and scientific community, to promote participation and an interest in science and to decrease the prevalence and adverse effects of misinformation. In its efforts toward reaching these goals, The Darwin Day Program has focused on year-round educational outreach (a.k.a., "Evolving Awareness"), as well as annual events and celebrations, around the world, on or near Feb. 12.

As part of this commemoration, Eastern plans to host five separate events, all of which are free and open to the public.

The Booth Library Speaker Series will present an open forum - "Interface Between Evolutionary Theory and Theology: Can A Darwinian Be Religious?" - at 7 p.m. **Monday, Feb. 9**, in Roberson Auditorium (room 2030), Lumpkin Hall. Panelists will include Father Joe Ring, priest at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Charleston; Sthanesswar Timalisina, faculty member at Washington University, St. Louis, and authority on Indian languages, religion, culture and philosophy; Gary G. Porton,

professor of Talmudic studies and Judaism at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana; Gary G. Fritz, a Methodist minister and former missionary to South America from Belleville, Wis.; Nargis Virani, faculty member at Washington University and authority on Arabic language and literature; and Tao Jiang, faculty member at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, and authority of Mahayana Buddhism and classical Chinese philosophy.

This forum is intended to be an open discussion between the public and the panelists.

John Wagner of the Field Museum of Natural History will present a one-man show, "A Chat with Charles Darwin," at 3 p.m. **Tuesday, Feb. 10**, in Phipps Auditorium, located in Eastern's Physical Sciences Building.

"Inherit the Wind," the 1960 movie which examines the "Scopes monkey trial" (and stars Spencer Tracy), will be shown at 7 p.m. **Tuesday, Feb. 10**, in room 2080 of EIU's Life Sciences Building. Another movie -- "Evolution: What About God?" - will be shown at 3 p.m. **Wednesday, Feb. 11**, in room 2040 of the Life Sciences Building.

Darwin Day events will conclude at 8 p.m. **Wednesday, Feb. 11**, with "Intelligent Design, Creationism and American Public Education," a presentation by Karen Bartelt, professor of chemistry at Eureka College. Bartelt will speak in Roberson Auditorium (room 2030) in Lumpkin Hall.

Additional general information about The Darwin Day Program can be found at <http://www.darwinday.org/about/index.html>.